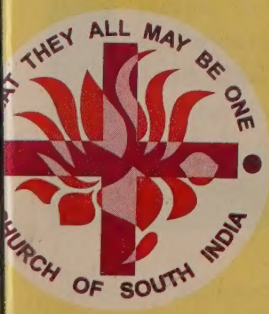


The South India CHURCHMAN

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The Magazine of the Church of South India

JANUARY 2000



CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA MILLENNIUM SYNOD

27TH SESSION, 12 - 16, JANUARY, 2000

CROSS : THE CONTINUING SIGN OF HOPE
VENUE : Wesley Boys' Junior College, Secunderabad.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH
JANUARY 2000

There are two freedoms - the false, where a man is free to do what he likes; the true, where a man is free to do what he ought. (*Charles Kingsley*)

Freedom is for people what air is for the birds. (*Guillaume van der Graft*)

A holy life will produce the deepest impression. Lighthouses blow no horns; they only shine. (*D.L.Moody*)

If you would convince a man that he does wrong, do right. Men will believe what they see. Let them see. (*Henry Thoreau*)

Over the triple doorway of the cathedral of Milan, there are three inscriptions spanning the splendid arches. Over one is carved a beautiful wreath of roses, and underneath is the legend 'All that pleases is but for a moment'. Over the other is a sculptured cross, and these are the words beneath: 'All that troubles is but for a moment.' But underneath the great central entrance in the main aisle is the inscription: 'That only is important which is eternal.'

God hides things by putting them near us. (*Anon*)

Our true nationality is mankind. (*H.G. Wells*)

Common sense, in an uncommon degree, is what the world calls wisdom. (*Coleridge*)

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The Magazine of the Church of South India

JANUARY 2000

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WELCOME 2000

Simple arithmetic tells us that the year 2000 does not denote the beginning of the third millennium but only brings to a close the second millennium. The first century is reckoned from 1 - 100 AD, the second from 101 - 200, the third from 201 - 300 and so on and simple calculations along these lines will show that the twentieth century starts from 1901 and ends in the year 2000. So strictly speaking the third millennium starts from the year 2001 and yet there has been so much of hype and hoopla about the year 2000. The only reason we can attribute to this excitement is that for almost 1000 years we got used to using the number 1 in the fourth digit and perhaps got tired of it too and now we are changing over to number 2 and that may perhaps explain the excitement that this magic figure 2000 has evoked in all of us.

There is also another way of looking at it. Many consider the year 2000 as the 2000th birth anniversary of Jesus Christ but there is almost unanimity among all scholars that Jesus Christ was born not 2000 years ago but somewhere between 6 and 4 B.C. There are even internal evidences in the scripture itself for the same. For instance Herod, the great, who made enquiries regarding the birth of Jesus, died in the year 2 B.C. and therefore Jesus must have been born definitely 1 or 2 years earlier than that and that would

indicate a date of 4 or 6 B.C. as the probable year when Jesus was born and if that be so then the 3rd millennium started already 4 or 5 years ago.

Further the celestial phenomenon of a unique star appearing in the sky which led the *Magi* to Bethlehem seems to be a reference to a conjunction of planets Venus and Jupiter which people could see as a bright luminous star in the skies and this conjunction happened sometime between 6 and 4 B.C. All these things go to prove that the birth of Jesus must have been a couple of years earlier than 1 A.D. Mortal as we are, even crossing over from a century to another century excites us and no wonder a millennial crossing

A VIEW FROM THE PFW

excites our imagination even more. Be that as it may, the figure 2000 excites our imagination and the whole world has gone ga-ga over it.

Many periodicals came out with their choice of the person of the century/millennium and there is an interesting wide variety of names chosen by various periodicals. The TIMES magazine declared Albert Einstein as the man of the century and for each preceding century of the 2nd millennium it came out with many illustrious names such as William, the Conqueror, Saladin who beat back the Crusaders, Genghis Khan, the Mongol Conqueror, Giotto the Italian Painter,

Johann Gutenberg, Queen Elizabeth the I, the scientist Isaac Newton, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Edison and so on. While none will quarrel about some of these choices it is still regrettable that we are enamoured of conquerors who were only known for their cruelty and an insatiable appetite for violence. All said and done, the towering personality of all millennia will certainly be the prince of peace who showed the world, a way of love, a way of life and a way of truth.

As we enter into the 3rd millennium let us be more pragmatic also and prepare plans for making this world a better place for all mankind to live in. Our plans should include: i. launching on a war-footing a nation wide campaign for population control. ii. taking steps to achieve total literacy in our country, making use of all the advancements made in this area, including women and children in this drive. iii. taking steps to conserve water iv. launching campaigns for the greening of the earth, planting millions of trees. v. Introducing measures to curb pollution of air and water.

The world is also becoming more and more materialistic and consumeristic. Let us all in the new millennium try to understand the ever relevant message of the pennyless preacher from Nazareth who said, 'it profits nothing for a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul'.

The newly elected officers for the biennium 2000 - 2002



(From L to R) Mr.Frederick William, *The Hon.Treasurer*, The Rt.Rev.Sugandhar, *Dy.Moderator*, The Most Rev. K.J.Samuel, *The Moderator*, Rev.G.Dyvasirvadam, *The General Secretary*.

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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE MOST REV. WILLIAM MOSES, THE MODERATOR - CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA

Greetings

Brothers and sisters, I greet you in the name of God who offers everyone the gift of life and love. In a context of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual death and decay, this greeting is a faith affirmation. God's gift of life and love, through Christ Jesus binds us together and compels us to follow in his way - A way of love.

*When love beckons to you,
follow him,*

*Though his ways are hard
and steep.*

*And when his wings enfold
you, yield to him,*

*And when he speaks to you
believe in him, though his
voice may shatter your*

*Dreams as the North wind lays
waste the garden (The Prophet by
Khalil Gibran)*

Welcome

On behalf of the Church of South India, let me welcome each and everyone of you, who has journeyed to be here at this

Millennium'. Vulgar display of wealth and power mark the beginning of another year, another century. New York alone spent \$7 million towards the millennium bash. On the other hand, almost as if in defiance, a small island in the pacific, the first to usher in the New Year, began with a chant and



The Moderator inaugurating the synod by lighting the 'kuthuvilakku'

prayer, clad in grass, seated on the earth the people looked up to the skies.

I welcome you on behalf of the Church, to the cave where a baby was born, 'wrapped in swaddling cloths', vulnerable, pitiful and yet alive - proclaiming life.

Let us therefore sing with Mary

beginning of the new millennium. We must discern together God's will and purpose. We must be vigilant and listen with bated breath for what the spirit may be saying to us. For it is this collective discernment and obedience that will ensure we are truly fulfilling God's mission through our Church.

When Jesus began his ministry two thousand years ago he was convinced of the fact that the spirit of the Lord was upon him, and had a clear vision of his mission as stated in the scripture portion he read in the synagogue of Nazareth where it is stated:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind to set free those who are down-trodden to proclaim the favourable year of the Lord." (Lk. 4:18-19)

At the beginning of this new millennium, as I welcome you to the synod, I pray that the Spirit of the Lord leads us. And let the

27th synod session at Secunderabad. January 12 - 16, 2000

momentous time.

I also welcome our overseas friends representing Churches, agencies and mission boards. Your continued solidarity and support through your presence, dialogue and material gifts is much appreciated and in the days that follow, I hope you will receive the inspiration to continue your journey with us.

The market and the media 'went to town' ushering in the 'New

and say : *our soul magnifies the Lord and our spirit rejoices in God our saviour. For he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his people - his servants.*

Let us usher in the new millennium and begin this our synod knowing and proclaiming that the mighty one has done great things in our Church, society, nation and indeed the entire world.

God in his wisdom has found it fitting for the CSI to have its 27th session of the synod at the very

people around us see the favourable year of the Lord dawning on them.

Remembrance

Let us pause for a moment and reflect with gratitude the life, death and resurrection of martyrs the world over and particularly in our country. Among those who have valiantly laid down their lives for the cause of the Gospel, stand out the names of the Staines family. We thank God for their witness and pray that we will learn something of the courage and faith of the

widow, Mrs. Staines.

However let us be reminded of the scores of others who have been persecuted for their faith. For in the name of religion and development several have been culturally displaced, spiritually alienated, socially ostracised and economically impoverished.

Scope

This address is not to be perceived as a biannual report of events and activities. My



The Moderator delivering the presidential address

colleagues, the General Secretary and the Treasurer will fulfil this task, I am sure. The purpose of this address is to make a reflection and initiate a dialogue today and subsequently within the Church - with regard to our life, ministry and service as we step into the future.

Church historians will script the last two years based on their perspectives. For myself I can only say that it has been 'an adventure of faith' and I conclude my term in office, richer for the experience.

F. Capra, the Philosopher Scientist reflecting on contemporary times, writes thus

"it is a complex, multi-dimensional crises whose facets touch every aspect of our lives - our health and livelihood, the quality of our environment and our

social relationships, our economy, technology, and politics. It is a crisis of intellectual, moral and spiritual dimensions - a crisis of scale and urgency unprecedented in recorded human history".

This state of affairs is also experienced in our country and recorded in the planned document of the Government of India.

"Decades of development have not had the desired impact on the socially, economically and

educationally handicapped groups. Their problems cannot be resolved through the percolation of general economic growth. The majority of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, who form one-quarter of the population, are below the poverty

line. Continuing to pursue traditional occupations, they are unable to participate fully in the process of modernisation. The practice of untouchability against Scheduled Castes is a special handicap for them, and even the few educated groups amongst them are unable to compete for job opportunities created while Scheduled Tribes still remain outside the mainstream of development mainly because of their relative isolation and their exploitation by outside agencies.

Within and around us the Church is faced with the marginalisation of Dalits, tribals, women and children. Despite 4 decades of planned development there has been an accentuation of disparities between different parts

of the country and different social groups : wage labourers and property owners, workers in organized and unorganized sectors, men and women etc. there is near stagnation in the *per capita* availability of essential goods. Our economy is marked by rising levels of unemployment, declining real wage rate, loss of jobs due to sickness in industry, neglect and degradation of the environment and uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources.

While analysts would ascribe a variety of reasons I simply state that it is the lack of political will and spiritual impoverishment which has led to the situation of decay, destruction and death.

The ideology of communalism is no longer on the fringe of Indian politics. It has crept into the strategy of several political parties. Whether it is the increased frequency and intensity of communal riots, or an all-pervasive increase in the mistrust with which communities look upon each other, this phenomenon has blunted or diverted the already weak struggle for justice and equality. The church needs to be wary of falling into the same trap of positing one form of fundamentalism with a counter christian fundamentalism.

Environmental destruction and the rapid depletion and degradation of natural resources, be it forests, land, water or air goes hand in hand with oppression and exploitation of the already deprived weaker sections of the society. Those who profit from destructive action are not the same as those who have to pay for it and bear the consequence. Millions of tribals and small and marginal farmers are being deprived of their rights to subsistence use of natural

resources. Mega development projects cost enormous suffering to the affected population and massive overuse and degradation of the surrounding natural resources.

The global forces impinging on our economic and political life have further destabilised our country. The process of globalization has ushered in a culture of consumerism threatening traditional value systems and relationships. It is in such a context that the Church must seek grace and interpret for herself and the world, God's love expressing solidarity with those in the periphery, affirm again and again 'the fullness of life'. The hope lies in the fact that there exists a voice of dissent - feeble as it may be, for this is a prophetic voice resisting all forces of dehumanisation. Is the church prepared and ready to affirm these actions and express solidarity with such?

The Diaconal Ministry is a small example of the Church exercising its faith and serving the community while being simultaneously transformed in the process. The concept and praxis of the Diaconal Ministry has been very well received both in the dioceses and among overseas partners. In fact the former director of the *Christian Aid* quoted extensively from the BDM document in his message to the CSI, during the special Synod. I wish to express my gratitude to the core group and the first Board of the Diaconal Ministry for their support and guidance. Especially I wish to mention the services of David Selvaraj and Jayakumar who selflessly gave their time and energy. The former, at some loss to himself and family accepted to stay on and ensure the recruitment and training of the newly appointed

staff. While thanking them I hope and pray that they will be willing to continue in their service to the Church and the latter will use their services.

The BDM is established on very sound theological and sociological moorings; it has the scope to enable the Church to be a creative witness in the society.

The revision to the constitution of the CSI and the conduct of the special synod constituted to debate and confirm the revision is yet another milestone in the history of our Church. More significantly was the introduction of a separate chapter on mission. This I believe is the most laudable contribution of the last two years. The Mission statement which has already received positive feedback must and should be studied in every diocese and at the level of the congregations, such that its true value will be internalized and the Church be guided in a ministry that is cohesive and relevant. This unity of thought and action would be the best response of gratitude, which we make to our forebears.

I acknowledge with gratitude the services of Prof. George Koshy, and his team for their insights and inputs in the framing of the revisions and particularly in the preparation of the mission statement.

Recognising that integral to the mission of God is our journey with the poor and marginalised, the CSI took the lead in bringing together other Churches in a *Convention on poverty* organized by the National

Council of Churches in India at Delhi in March 1999.

The CSI were well represented and made a significant contribution both in terms of insights/inputs and materially to the hosting of such an initiative.

Several delegates and visitors claimed this to be one of the first ecumenical gathering dealing with the issue of poverty and injustice and the Church's response to such in the next decade.

My prayer and hope is that the CSI will pursue the guidelines set out in the statement of the CSI. The



The Moderator and the General Secretary with their spouses

churches (in India) with secular progressive forces need to evolve a structure that will be an effective enabler. Enabling the churches to critically reflect on contemporary issues from a theological perspective and evolve strategies and programmes at a national level which may be taken up by any single denomination or collectively by several denominations.

However it is not only to address the growing persecutions and oppositions to the mission and ministries of the church, but more important, it is to breakdown the growth of the oppressive structures in our societies and the nation wherein millions and millions of our weaker brothers and sisters are becoming victims of several

dehumanising situations.

From 11th to 14th November 1999 the Executive Committees of the CSI, CNI and MTC had a historic meeting on the Charal mountain of Tiruvalla (Kerala) and have taken several important decisions. Most important of them is the agreement for a common name for this united body as *'Communion of the CSI-CNI-MTC'*. While retaining their independent identity and structures there is definite understanding of togetherness for participation in



The band in attendance

common progress and ministries.

One very practical step in establishing a joint venture is the liaison desk that will be established in Delhi. An office that will ensure a service to the CNI, CSI and MTC of simultaneously feeding the Churches with vital information and analysis on issues of national concern and ensuring that the concerns of the church are brought to the fore in the capital.

Finally, recognising and affirming the potential of our youth as future leaders in the church and society - indeed in the nation, the CSI have established the youth department. An initiative for which substantial credit should go to the Rev. Dyvasirvadham. The Rev. Vinod Victor as the first Youth Secretary has made a commendable

start and must pursue this ministry with vision guided by the compulsion of affirming life and preparing the next generation for leadership.

As the new year dawned several thousand youth met at ten different cities ushering in the new year and pledging their energies to the building up of the Church and Nation.

Besides systematic efforts at perspective formation and the development of the human potential within the church, we have also been concerned and sensitive stewards of the assets and human resources gifted to us over the years.

The fruits of the 200 years of the ministries of the missionaries in South India is now visible in every aspect of life, not only within the Christian communities but also in the whole state. The whole nation admits the fact that Kerala state can claim 100% literacy in large measure because of contribution of the Christian institutions. Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhr Pradesh are not far behind.

Our congregations and institutions have produced millions of good and committed leaders both within the Church and also in the State, many of them have become prominent leaders with a very high degree of integrity and commitment.

It is therefore a matter of pride and to be placed on record the comment of President K.R.Narayanan. *"If I have any sense of values and commitment to serve the nation I developed them in the institutions where I studied.*

India needs now than over before such institutions of high values and Christian workers of true commitment".

Due to crucial introspection and application of management principles we realise the need to develop our resources and manage them effectively. We still have large areas of costly properties untouched and in some cases uncared for. Therefore there are encroachments and unauthorised occupations.

What we now need most urgently is to develop a proper system of property management along with property development. None of the 20 CSI Dioceses in India has developed suitable structure with qualified and professional people to develop and manage our properties.

The CSITA is currently staffed by a retired officer and skeletal staff. While acknowledging their services we need to evolve policies and identify appropriate staff to ensure our objectives are met.

Yes indeed the Church of South India is taking confident steps - a sign of our maturity. Given our position in Asia and given the analysis that Asia, atleast in terms of numbers, will have the largest Christian population in the world, we need to recognise our responsibility and constantly prepare ourselves for the future. The future is marked by consumerism and materialism that reduce people, into objects, culturally and spiritually alienating them. Further one sees clearly the signs of increased persecution and a threat to the fundamental rights of the citizen. A weak and divided leadership with no political will spells doom. It is vital for us to be vigilant for our maturity will

constantly be put to the test. It is a submission to the will of the Divine and respect to the earth and each other which will grant us the power to face the challenges ahead.

Looking ahead : Contem-plative action

It is an anticipatory experience of the reign of God in the here and now that provides us the space to dream and look ahead with hope.

As we look ahead and plan, our action needs to be both contemplative and action oriented. One without the other minimizes the focus of thrust and commitment.

This is a moment of *Kairos* - and the Church must listen to the prophetic voice of Dr.Ambedkar.

"How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy."

As we look to the future, we need to focus our energies and imagination on the mission of God. This has to begin by reinterpreting common notions and current interpretations of the term. Being true to our ministry and calling, we must examine its relevance for the society we live in and collectively discern the Spirit's movement.

There is a desperate urgency to revive the VELCOM programme or other such initiatives, by way of equipping local congregations and the Church as a whole to take up their discipleship seriously and

contribute towards being the Church in the World. We once again remember with gratitude Bishop V.Premasagar and others who offered us this vision and programme. But we need to ask, what has been the impact of VELCOM programme on the life of our congregations? Perhaps an assessment of its strength and weakness in concrete situations must be made so that we may learn from the experience. Given the fact that about 70% of our congregations are in the villages and that they are deprived of any effective pastoral ministry, it is urgent that we developed a cadre of church workers like the former catechists, who will minister to and with the people in the villages, empowering them for effective witness.

Through this and other such programmes we need to constantly remind ourselves of God's continued involvement in history and his invitation to people to be in partnership, in the process of recreating the cosmos. It is only when the majority, if not all members of the Church participate in this understanding and respond, will the Church be truly transformed and be empowered to transform the world. How to transform our congregations into communities that struggle with our neighbors for a just and peaceable social order?

Given the context we live in, the focus I wish the Church to reflect on is a ministry of peace and reconciliation.

While the Government is unable to provide even basic primary education to 400 million people, and thousands of villages are not



A section of the gathering

able to get even drinking water, our nation is spending a large portion of our limited resources for military and war equipments including nuclear arms. Our neighbour Pakistan is competing with us. The tension is further growing in the relationships between these two neighbours with the recent Kargil war and the hijack of the IA aircraft. These are indications that the danger is not far away from us.

The war equipments and weapons producing industries in the Western countries continue to flourish. Their markets are Africa and Asia. The Churches in Asia and Africa should be bold enough to question the justification of the western countries.

The most important teachings of our Lord are summarised in the Beatitude by Matthew, the Evangelist, where Jesus says,

'Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called children of God'

The members of the Church, the body of Christ can claim ourselves as children of God only when we are engaged in the peace mission.

The ministry of reconciliation is the most important mission entrusted to the Church by our Lord.

The Asian Church, and particularly the Indian Church has a special responsibility to take initiative for global peace in the new millennium. We should challenge the world church, especially the western church bodies to use their influence on their governments to critically look at their involvement directly and indirectly, in perpetuating conflicts around the world. *Instead of establishing peace keeping forces after the conflicts have arisen, we should commit to a Peace Making mission directed towards eliminating conditions that generate conflicts and thus realize the prophet's vision of converting all destructive weapons into constructive instruments.* "They shall beat their swords into plough shares and their spears into pruning hooks, nation will not lift up sword against nation neither shall they learn war anymore - (Mic 4:3).

For the congregations and the

Church as a whole to be meaningfully engaged in mission and that with a focus on peace and reconciliation, the Church must consider the following:

a) Recognise and affirm people of other faiths and seek meaningful ways to collaborate in a vocation of peace and reconciliation.

b) Recognise and affirm NGOs, Social Movements and others in civil society who are engaged in processes of societal transformation. This recognition should lead to areas of collaboration and dialogue.

c) Need for us to evolve fresh perspectives on the Earth and Ecological concerns and integrate these perspectives into our theology.

d) Work with our seminaries in evolving perspectives on curriculum and methodology that will provide the necessary inputs and skills for future generations of

those going into ministry, to remain rooted in the villages.

e) Work with our own educational institutions enabling them integrate fresh perspectives on mission into the school curriculum and methodology such that institutions will focus on preparing truly integrated persons for life in society and that they will cater to the least and the last, as was their original mission.

Conclusion

All this needs a radical transformation of our positions, policies and structures. We must divest ourselves of power and self seeking (I count myself as first among those who need to seek repentance and God's grace). Only a servant Church can be an effective model to sustain the mission of affirming life - *abundant life*. Let us follow Christ who promised, 'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly' (John 10:10).

Innovation at the Synod

For the first time the Synod had a Newspaper of its own. The first issue of *CSI Diary* (Vol.27, No.1) was brought out on 14th January 2000 with a short report on the inauguration, the Presidential address, the General Secretary's Report and the Bible Study of the Most Rev. Vinod Peter, Moderator of CNI. It was a two page newspaper. The second page carried an article on the theme song, which was also the first in the Synod. The words for the theme song were composed by the General Secretary and set to music by the Director of Communication. This theme song was generally liked by all the synod delegates (*To be published in the next issue*)

Bishop Mano Rumlshaw of Peshawar, Pakistan, Gen. Secretary, USPCK, compliments the CSI.

The Rt.Rev.Mano Rumlshaw who led the Bible studies at the millennium synod concluded his final devotion affirming the greatness and the maturity of the CSI at the global level. He said 50 years after the Doranakal bishop Azariah, the voice of the CSI was heard loud and clear at the Lambeth in the powerful address delivered by the Most Reverend William Moses, the Moderator of the CSI at the Lambeth conference of 1998.



THE BIENNIAL REPORT OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY

*Grace to you and peace from
God our Father and the Lord
Jesus Christ - Rom. 1 : 7*

In the words of this apostolic greeting, I welcome you to this 27th synod of the Church of South India. I welcome the bishops and all the delegates representing the 21 dioceses of the Church of South India. Most of you have travelled far to come to Secunderabad. For many of you, it may not only be the first visit to Andhra Pradesh, but perhaps the first time for participating in a major Council of our Church. May God through the Holy Spirit bless our encounters, deliberations and the discussions.

I greet those of you who are here as fraternal representatives, visitors, partners and honoured guests and thus make visible for us the wider context of the ecumenical movement in which the Church of South India is an active partner. I welcome the visitors whose presence reminds us that millions of christian people around the world from the West and the East are with this synod in their thoughts and prayers.

Finally I want to extend a special greeting to the members of and the Church in the Medak Diocese, our hosts. I thank all those who have laboured over the past weeks here in the twin cities to prepare for this unique event at the beginning of this millennium, for your dedication and for the hospitality we are enjoying.

I deem it a great privilege to present this report about the life and work of our Church. The journey from Arogyavaram in 1998 to Secunderabad is not very long compared to the distance that many members have travelled from all

over the world to this place. But it has not been a smooth journey for the people of the Church. It has literally been an experience of grappling with faith, at a time when the very existence and witness of the Church were looked at with suspicion and intolerance by the friends of the other major faiths in India. Particularly our brothers and sisters in North India underwent a traumatic and excruciating pain in facing the burning of the churches and prayer

realize their unfulfilled dreams of liberation.

At this juncture we also recall the struggles of the people of Jaffna who were caught up between violent conflicts there. While we express our solidarity with those suffering we hope and pray for an amicable settlement that would wipe the tears of the people and bring back a smile of hope in them.

The Theme of the Synod

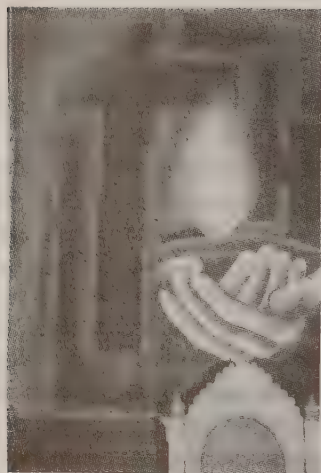
The theme of the Synod, '*Cross: The Continuing Sign of Hope*' is derived out of the present day socio-political situation of India. After the tremendous struggle of the people of God, particularly in the North and because of the uncertainties of the situation the CROSS becomes something unique and significant for the lives of christians in particular and the community at large in India. A new understanding and interpretation of the Cross and a new experience and enrichment, have to be arrived at and practised by the children of the new generation and new history, seeking the will of God afresh and yet continue to receive the same power of God as our fathers and mothers, that provides a new hope to all of us in the midst of suffering and struggle.

Within the reality of pluralism, our grass root level christian communities find themselves surrounded by neighbours of other faiths and cultural traditions. The CROSS will not become yet another sign to be added to myriads of religious symbols in India but stands as a unique symbol of sorrow and pain, joy and victory of millions of lives who struggle for a fuller humanity.



The General Secretary presenting the report houses, the rape and humiliation of nuns, liquidation of a few yet important religious leaders including Graham Staines, a missionary from Australia, who served for 37 years in India, along with his children - all threatening the faith journey.

The hope of the Dalit-Christians in India still remains distant, for their struggle towards a fuller humanity received little attention and sympathy. In other words, in spite of all the efforts taken by the leaders of the Church at large in India, the Dalits in the Church are destined to continue to struggle to



The painting on the theme which served as the backdrop (painting by Asha Edwin)

MAJOR EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE SYNOD

The Executive and Working Committees

The Executive Committee met five times and the Working Committee met 4 times in this biennium.

One of the significant decisions of the Synod Executive Committee was about the utilisation of the CWM Grants under Self Support Fund (Rupees 42 million) and the Mission Programme Support Fund (to be approved by CWM) with special consideration of the needs of the weaker dioceses; the recommendation of the sub committee appointed by the Executive Committee EC: 98-29. As a result the project, which was recommended by the Working Committee WC: 98, 38 commercial complexes are to be built in the following places:

1. St. John's Church, Egmore, Chennai
2. St. George's Church, Abids, Hyderabad
3. Race Course Road, Coimbatore
4. CSI Compound, Vijayawada
5. Tiruchirappalli
6. Nagercoil

The Mission Programme

Support Fund, another project of CWM approved by the Synod Executive Committee to establish 200 Village Community Centres giving priority to the weaker dioceses with the thrust on Community worship, free tuition to the rural children, adult education, primary health, programmes of youth and women (Empowerment of women), Bible studies and inter-faith fellowships was another important decision taken.

Revision of Constitution: Contextual Restructuring

The process of revising our Constitution has been going on for the last six years. The special session of the synod convened in January 1999 approved many changes in the constitution, which have far-reaching significance to the life of the Church. All the amendments passed by the synod have to be ratified by the diocesan councils. Only a few diocesan councils have been able to ratify the amendments. When two thirds of the diocesan councils ratify them they will come into force. A small committee appointed by the executive committee of the synod is working on byelaws to be adopted and it is hoped that after ratification of the amendments to the constitution by the diocesan councils, the bye laws can be presented to the synod in 2002.

The CSI Diaconal Ministry: A Call to Revisioning

I am happy to report that the Diaconal Ministry has become operational during this biennium.

In pursuance of its Mission of capacity building of churches, to be of meaningful service to the most marginalised, the Diaconal Ministry is focussed on initiating relevant activities in remote, rural

areas. Further, there is now a radical shift from the earlier centralised approach of the erstwhile councils to decentralisation and devolution of decision-making powers to the dioceses and regions.

The Diaconal Ministry is also a great source of support to the departments of the synod. I am sure that the director will give us more details in his report.

Youth : A New Awakening

The CSI in its 52 years history, for the first time, recognising the new awakening among the youth, initiated a department with a full time secretary to cater to the needs of the youth and to meet the emerging visions of the youngsters of the church guiding them to envision new dreams to make the life of the church more meaningful



The Old rugged Cross

and receive concrete experiences in Christ. Most of your dioceses have already witnessed the impact of this department.

Internal Streamlining

a. With the restructuring of the Councils (Council for Technical and Vocational Training, Council for Healing Ministry, Council for

Education) all the project staff had to be retrenched and the administrative staff were accommodated in the other departments and the synod Secretariat. However, as the Councils for Education and Healing Ministry could not be wound up they would continue. The Councils can still work out a new modality to cater to the basic needs of the rural communities in our dioceses.

b. I am very glad to inform you that the working of the offices of the General Secretary, Treasurer, CSITA and CSIDM and the Communication Department have been computerised and electronic typewriters have been introduced in all the synod departments for smooth and efficient functioning of the office. The office now enjoys the facility of *e-mail and internet*, enabling faster communication both locally and internationally. The details pertaining to the history, life and work of the CSI can now be accessed from our website (www.csisynod.org).

c. The official magazine of the Church of South India **The South India Churchman** and the publications of the departments of the synod are now being processed in the CSI Centre itself. In this connection I assure that all the dioceses will receive one computer each so that a network can be established between the working of the synod and the diocesan offices to enable faster and accurate means of communication. The South India Churchman has improved its readership and also in the quality of its articles. Of course it still

needs a change of name.

d. It was so exciting to receive the amazing love and great strength from God that the team of officers was able to make progress in several areas of the church life. It became possible to enter into a dialogue with the tenant of the



The Treasurer presenting the biennial report

Sunny Side Bungalow at No. 4 Whites Road, that led to a mutual understanding between the two parties thus enabling the church to reclaim that place. After renovation of this Bungalow, the Synod Executive Committee has resolved to use this premises to start a **CSI Working Women's Hostel** for the benefit of the women who come from different dioceses to work at Madras. With the inauguration of this hostel, the CSI Centre will also have regular canteen facilities.

Leslie Newbigin Study and Research Centre: An Indigenous Abode of Learning

The Executive Committee of the synod resolved to establish bishop Leslie Newbigin Study and Research Centre and Archives in collaboration with the Madras diocese enabling short training and research programmes envisaged for national and international researchers. Mrs. Margaret Beetham and John, the children of

bishop Leslie met the officers both at London and at the CSI Centre promising to make available the copies of all the literature of the late bishop which will be shared between the Library, Selly Oak Colleges and the Centre at Chennai. However, it has no connection with similar centres established elsewhere.

Dalit and Adivasi Concerns: A New Paradigm of Empowering

Based on the discussions of the synod at Rayalaseema the Executive Committee that met on 4 - 6, Nov 1998 appointed a committee and studied the need and the nature of a Department of

Dalit and Adivasi Concerns. This was finally approved. As a result of this a committee has already been identified in the proposed nominations Committee to initiate the work of this department. This department will aim at the empowerment of the dalits and adivasis to assure them that the church has renewed its commitment to be in solidarity with the poor and oppressed people and help them in their struggle to create a just society. And further the following aims and objectives of the Board were suggested:

- a reappraisal of Hindu caste system from the perspective of christian faith
- an analysis of Church's life, structures and theology to assess the nature and extent of the practice of caste in the church and study its impact in the discrimination of dalits and adivasis
- to attempt and to conceive and construct theologies, ideologies and

strategies.

Bishops' Consecration: A Special Calling

CSI now enjoys the episcopal ministry in all dioceses. During this biennium the following six bishops were consecrated.

1. The Rt. Rev. Dr. James Srinivasan, Trichy-Thanjavur diocese - 5, July 1998

2. The Rt. Rev. Dr. V. Devasahayam, Madras. 2, May 1999

3. The Rt. Rev. Dr. George Isaac, North Kerala. 8, July 1999

4. The Rt. Rev. Mahimai Rufus, Vellore, 6, Aug 1999

5. The Rt. Rev. P.J. K. Balmi, Karnataka North 4 Sept 1999

6. The Rt. Rev. S. Jeyapaul David Tirunelveli, 21 Nov 1999

Church's Response To Social Issues

In addition to the regular stream of work that the church is committed to doing, she also was conscious of the pressing needs and demands of the community around her. The church expressed her solidarity with the nation and humanity in general by responding timely during the following occasions.

a. Oneness and solidarity with the national stream of life was expressed particularly during the crisis of the Kargil War. The CSI rose to the need by way of collecting Rs. 25 lakhs towards the rehabilitation of the war victims i.e, orphans and widows of the slain soldiers.

b. Ghastly tidal waves swept the East Coast region of our nation wiping out the lives of a few thousands and displaced nearly 1 lakh people in Orissa. The CSI



The Most Rev. Vinod Peter, Moderator CNI conducting the bible study
recognised the emergency of this situation and by joining hands with the CNI and MTC, extended all support and adopted two villages towards the work of rehabilitation of the people affected by this natural catastrophe.

CMS Bi-Centenary Celebrations

During 1999 the CMS celebrated her bi-centenary. In this connection one of our church representatives Ms. Geethamma Matthew from Madhya Kerala



Partners in Mission having a chat

diocese was sent to London for a six months exposure under the 'Everywhere to Everywhere programme'. The dioceses with CMS background also had their celebrations to mark this occasion. The Church of South India is

grateful to the Church Mission Society for the contribution and the support extended.

Mission is Partnership

I had the privilege to represent this great Church at meetings of partner churches and ecumenical resource sharing agencies in Europe. During my visits I had the opportunity to meet the leaders of EMS, EMW, RCN, CMS, USPG, CWM, Church of Scotland, WACC, WCO, Methodist Church and Anglican Communion and the Resource Sharing Agencies like EZE, BFW, ICCO and Christian Aid. During these visits and meetings it was found that these church agencies and organisations do continue to have concern and respect for the Church of South India and have extended their continued support to us. They indeed expressed their sympathy and solidarity with churches in India particularly in the context of the wounds inflicted on the Church in India in the recent past. I express on behalf of CSI our grateful thanks to all these organisations and their leadership for their generous gesture.

During the year 1999 I was privileged to participate in the EMS Mission Council followed by the Synod held at Stuttgart and Hofgeismar from the 13th to 17th October where Dr. P. Surya Prakash of the Medak Diocese, who was on the faculty of UTC, was appointed as the India Liaison Secretary in EMS.

For the first time the Council for World Mission invited all the General Secretaries of the CWM Family Churches, to London from the 18th to 22nd October 1999 to discuss the Self Support Initiatives and the Mission Support Fund and

the nature of utility in the Churches.

My meetings with the leadership of the ERSAs enabled us to discover their serious concern and relationship with the Church of South India. This was very visible in their expression of concern for the formation of BDM and their expectations of the immediate involvement of BDM in the dioceses.

New Partnership

Another significant visit, was to participate in the general Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea held at Ulsan, Korea which had the theme "*The New Millennium : Send me, God*" - 13 to 16 September 1999. PROK was the church that originated out of a great socio-political struggle of the people in Korea. It may be just a coincidence that even in this General Assembly as in the WCC, the emphasis was on the act of repentance as the Church in Korea prepares for the Jubilee General Assembly to be held in 2003. In this connection I am very excited to inform this august body that a couple of presbyteries (Church Council) have come forward to be in partnership with Rayalaseema diocese and the PROK has entered into partnership with the Church of

Committee. This requires the consent of this august body. In this connection I am happy to state that the Karnataka Central Diocese and Karimnagar Diocese are also on their way to build a partnership with the Church in Wurttenburg in Germany.

Another Golden Jubilee!

The Moderator and I with a team participated in the 8th assembly of the **World Council of Churches** held at Harare, Zimbabwe in December 1998. The Golden Jubilee assembly recalled the exciting ecumenical adventurous journey from Amsterdam to Harare and the assemblies, committees, struggles, successes, failures, enthusiasm and disappointment during the fifty years of the existence of the WCC. With great visions and expectations about 4900 people representing millions of christians all over the world arrived at a landmark, for self criticism and re-commitment, with the theme "*Turn to God - Rejoice in Hope*". The march of the Church during the two millennia, with all its transforming presence and also with its tragic adventures enabled the people of God to emerge as a strong and a deeply committed body of Christ.

During the presentation of papers there was great emphasis on *anamnesis*, a greater remembrance of extraordinary



The Choir of a local church rendering spiritual songs

events, which remain as the main root of all growing faith communities. *Anamnesis*, memory defines our Christian identity; the remembrance of the amazing intervention of God in the life of humanity. The memory is not a simple intellectual function but is an action; *Anamnesis* in the liturgical language defines the core of the Eucharistic *anaphora* - the consecrated offering. This act of memory is even broader. Beginning with Christ's words "Take, eat, this is my body ... and drink of it all of you; for this is my blood of the new covenant", it proceeds to the offering, the invocation of the Holy Spirit, culminates in the sanctification of the holy gifts and their sanctification by the power of the Holy Spirit and is completed through Holy Communion becoming a personal event. Thus memory becomes an incessant dynamic turning to the Triune God the source of being; a grafting into Christ, a receiving of the Holy Spirit towards encouraging Church to maintain a vitality and truth on one hand and to engage to continue to offer *diakonia* to the people.

The WCC further emphasised *metanoia*, 'conversion' or in other words, a 'turning back'. It is in the context of the two tenets that were emphasised, I bring the message of WCC to our synod and



Ethnic touch to the Eucharist

South India in the larger context. It was approved in the Executive

dare to say how significant these two acts are - memory and repentance in the wider act of turning to God which alone gives greater hope in reconciliation with God and fellow humans.



A scene from the cultural program

I am delighted in this connection to inform this synod that I am chosen to the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches that met at Geneva 26th Aug through 3rd September 1999. The Moderator, His Holiness Aram I emphasised that there was a need for the emergence of an *ecclesio-centric* ecumenism which of course should not be misunderstood as a shift away from *christo-centrism*. The centrality of Christ for our fellowship is implied in our current emphasis on ecclesiology. Perhaps this message is highly relevant to the life and witness of the CSI while we also emphasise the basic Christian communities (local congregations) which are the strength of this Church.

I am very glad to inform this august body that the Rt. Rev. Dr. J.W. Gladstone is on the Faith and Order Commission, the Rt. Rev. Dr. V. Devasahayam on the advisory group on Justice, Peace and Creation and I have been placed on the Committee of Special Fund to Combat Racism. In this

connection I would also like to say that Prof. George Koshy was elected to the Standing Committee of the Anglican Consultative Council at its meeting in Scotland last September.

National Meetings

One of the significant meetings that took place in Chennai was the CSI Relationship Committee. Three papers on resource sharing and mission priorities and visions of the new generation were presented and discussed with a view to rebuilding the local congregations and strengthening the CSI. The Consultation made the following recommendations which were later on approved by the Executive Committee dated 28th and 29th October 1998.

1. to start **Village Community Centres (VCC)** as loci for resource development
2. to initiate alternative models of self employment;
3. to encourage local congregations to function as NGOs
4. literacy programme, education for girl children, skill and leadership training programmes be envisaged in the VCCs;

There was a stress on the special assistance being extended to the weaker dioceses. In this connection I am glad to report that the CSI RC representatives agreed to increase the funding from 16 to 20

millions.

Visitors: Source of Encouragement

A team from EKD visited us and had an elaborate discussion with the officers of the synod about the programmes and the life of the church. They were also concerned over the unfortunate events that affected and scared the christians in North India on the 10th February 1999. The team was led by the Rt. Rev. Walter Herranbruck and included some of our familiar friends related through other organisations like the Rt. Rev. Dr. Rolf Koppe who is connected to the ESP Scholarships Programme, Rev. Dr. Klaus Schaffer from EMW, Dr. Werner Hoerschelmann, Chairman, KNH and Dr. Hartmut Bauer, Executive Secretary, EZE.

We also had the privilege of receiving a high level ecumenical team from the Presbyterian Church of the Republic of Korea.

There have been a host of overseas visitors to the Church of South India specially to the Synod Centre including Mr. Ad Mook Reformed Church of Netherlands, Dr. Mrs. Lucy Dulfer, Rev. Mc



Another scene from the cultural program

Kenzi, Friends of Church in India, Mr. Leo Bashyam, Christian Aid,

Jane Abbot Ray Hassan, Dr. Preman Niles, Council for World Mission, Dr. Andrew Morton,

thus became a new paradigm of unity in the modern history of Christianity. It is in this context I report with pride that yet another generation made an effort at formation of **The Communion of Churches** in India across the traditional and confessional lines and no one knew whether the new frame work would be viable.

churches from each other and the time - on earth or in heaven - when it will be visibly true that there is one shepherd and one flock.

While this is happening in the wider context CSI has initiated a negotiation with a large number of the congregations around Kadiri area in Andhra Pradesh some of them belonging to the Lambadi Gypsy communities. They very much look forward to receiving support from the Church of South India with a strong desire to join the mainline life of the CSI. The Executive Committee (EC: 98-19) appointed a small committee under the convenorship of Rev. Victor Joshua to study the viability of the possible merger (EC 99- 13). Meanwhile the Department of Mission and Evangelism was advised to follow up the work with a view to adopt the same as Kadiri Mission of CSI.

And Finally....

At the end of the biennium 1998-2000 as I look back, I consider these couple of years a unique time of pilgrimage with a variety of encounters, challenges and rich experiences and also sometimes disappointments, frustrations and anxious moments.



Partners in Mission bringing greetings

Dr. Laurent Ramambassan, Rev. Gordon Shaw, Convenor of the Relationships Committee, Rev. Peter Sulston, Methodist Church, Mrs. Margaret Beetham, Leslie Newbiggin's Family Mr. John, Rev. Loiuise Plocke, EMS Ms. Andrea Rev. Julie Lipp Nathaniel USPG, Rev. Bussy Arulampalam UCA, Rev. Victor Makari, Presbyterian Church in USA, Rev. J. Roger Schrock Reformed Church in America, Rev. Martin Wietz, Rev. Dr. Klaus Sheiffer, CMW, Ms. Erika Marke, Bread for the World, Ms. Hedwig Schalgs, EZE, Mr. Hartmut Bauer, Ms. Jill Hughes, Church of Scotland, Ms. Liz Russell, Church Mission Society, Rev. George Kovoov Crowther Hall, Mr. Eric Gass, UCBMW, Ms. Anne Smith, Anglican Church, The Rt. Rev. Terry Brown, Anglican Communion.

Towards Wider Unity: Reunderstanding Ecumenism

The creation of the Church of South India 52 years ago, was an act of faith. There was no precedent of such an ecumenical and ecclesial unity of the faith for the common task of proclaiming his word and unity in the world. CSI

The Executive Committees of the three churches i.e., the CSI, CNI and the Marthoma Syrian Church, met at Charalkunnu, Tiruvalla between the 12th and 15th November 1999 and agreed to join into a new *oikumene* (the household of God) i.e., Communion of Churches in India which needs perhaps a discussion and approval by this august body. This unity is an effort towards an *ecclesial* union (of the faithful communion) trying to transcend our liturgical and traditional divisions. This communion also is our struggle to come to grips with our common witness as an expression of our ecumenical affirmation. The proposed scheme envisages a common lectionary, common liturgy and a common *diakonia*.

Our name **The Communion of Churches in India** indicates our weakness and shame before God, for there can be and there is finally only one Church of Christ on earth. Our communion represents therefore an emergency solution, a stage on the journey - a body living between the time of complete isolation of the



A partner in Mission presenting a momento

I consider this synod as crucial

because we have come here with despair and hope, frustration and enthusiasm. Is this paradox not part of our life together? What brings us all together in this auditorium is the common vision of unity and our firm engagement to working together to witness to the one Lord and one Church in this land. As children of this new era of history we renew our covenant and commitment in the same Lord whom our fathers and mothers trusted. We intend to stay together. Neither lack of progress nor setback, neither failures nor uncertainties, neither fears nor threats will weaken our intention to continue to walk together in this unity in the life of the Church of South India.

In this march let us discover new ways of witnessing and acting together in the same faith of our fathers and mothers together in

faith towards greater peace, closer fellowship and fuller life. There is no fulfillment of this without risk. Yet we must continue this journey challenging, understanding and respecting each other because this is the call of God. This is the sacred task before us. It is my deep desire that our prayers and meditation, our reflections and deliberations during these few days be strengthened, enriched and guided by this vision and commitment. And let us with this hope recognise the **Cross**, which provides us with **the continued hope** even to our children in the years to come.

I take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to the Most Rev. William Moses, the Moderator, the Rt. Rev. K.J. Samuel, the Deputy Moderator and Mr. Frederick William, the Hon. Treasurer for all the guidance, wise counsel and support that they have

been giving me all through the biennium. My sincere appreciation are due to the directors of the departments, the Youth Secretary and the General Secretary of the Women's Fellowship for the whole hearted cooperation and committed service that they have rendered for the benefit of the entire church and for their dynamic association with me as colleagues in ministry. I also thank each and every member of the staff of the synod Secretariat who have been of great help to me in discharging my duties to the best of my satisfaction.

May God continue to guide us and empower us with His Spirit during the sessions of the synod and in the years to come to proclaim His power and glory, that even as we traverse the path of the Cross its promise would be made manifest in and through our lives.

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Chairman

World Vision of India

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This multi-colour cross was made out by an artist with the banners brought by the dioceses to the 27th synod, Jan 12 - 16, 2000 at secunderabad.

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